HANDSOME HARRY

STORIES OF LAND AND SEA.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office by Frank Tousey.

No. 2. **NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 3, 1899.** **Price 5 Cents.**

LOUIS DAVIDSON.
1817 CLIFTON ST.
BALTIMORE MD.

HANDSOME HARRY'S PERIL;

— OR —

SAVED BY HIS TRUSTY CREW.

By Author of "Handsome Harry."

Howling with fury, they made for Harry (who was now sitting on the keel of the overturned boat) resolved to have his life before they died. Howling and foaming, they sought to drag him down, but his swift cutlass struck right and left.

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LOUIS DAVIDSON,
1817 CLIFTON ST.
BALTIMORE, M.D.

Chapter 12 continues

BY THE AUTHOR OF HANDSOME HARRY.

CHAPTER I.

The Chinaman was light and bony, but he was heavy enough to knock down our dark friend, upon whom he came in such an unexpected manner. Down they went, locked in each other's arms, Samson's head coming upon the floor with a sound like the fall of a skittle-ball.

"Wurra dat for, you Chingy?" he demanded. "Conflound your dash imprence! wurra dat for?"

Ching-Ching, with every particle of breath knocked out his weazen body, could only roll his eyes in reply. Samson demanded in a louder tone of voice:

"Wurra dat for?

"You come and play your praceral jokes on me," he said, "and I knock your pulpy head into squash."

"De capen chuck me into de air, and I cum down head fust," replied Ching-Ching. "Him a berry strong man."

"Golly!" said Samson, turning up his eyes in ecstasy; "am dat the fact?"

"All trufe," said Ching-Ching. "I hope dis am all right."

There was not even a bone of the umbrella broken, much to the comfort of Samson and Ching-Ching. The next thing to be examined was his fan, and this, as he took it from his breast, he dropped.

To Samson's great astonishment, he picked it up with his foot and passed it up to his hand in a perfectly natural manner.

"Dat a rum foot," he said.

"High-caste Chinamen use feet as well as hands," replied Ching-Ching. "My farder in Pekin use to walk about with him feet in the air, like true mandarin. Common people walk on their feet."

"Am dat true?" asked Samson.

"See dis," said Ching-Ching, turning over. "Shake hands, Samson."

Samson gave him a paw, and Ching-Ching with his foot shook it heartily; then he picked up his umbrella with one foot, and opened it with the other. Samson was delighted.

"Oh! Chingy," he said, "you berry good friend, indeed. Can you do oder tricks?"

"Lots," said Ching-Ching, resuming his proper perpendicular, with a wink. "Ching-Ching berry good conjurer; show Samson by un by."

They then returned to deck, where they found the men busy with getting three of the boats ready, under the superintendence of Tom True.

"What's up, Massa Tom?" asked Samson.

"If the wind holds, we mean to run through that gap and go ashore to-morrow," replied Tom.

"Good fun to go ashore," said Samson.

"Berry good fun," added Ching-Ching.

"Then you had better both come," said Tom, with a sly look at Ching-Ching; "we shall have some good fun. We are going hunting."

"Ching-Ching berry fond ob hunting," said the Chinaman. "My farder in Pekin berry great hunter. One day he go out arter a big brown bear that come in and gobble-gobble up my lilly brudder, playing wif a tea-chest. My farder find de bear and point de gun. Poof—no fire, flint bad, berry wet; de big bear pounce on my farder, swallow quick all but the pig-tail; when my mudder come up, ketch hold ob de pig-tail, and pull him back again."

"Oh! Ching-Ching," said Tom.

"Dat quite true," said Ching-Ching; "but not all de trufe. When my farder in de bear he hab time enuf to feel about for my lilly brudder, and he find him berry hot, but not quite dead; so he bring him back too."

"Dat a most worrerful story," said Samson, who had swallowed it—tail and all.

"De Ching-Chings berry wonderful fam'ly," said Ching-Ching. "Dere was an uncle ob mine——"

"At Pekin?" said Tom.

"No, sar; not at Pekin."

"Then get away," said Tom, "for such wonderful yarns as you spin could only happen at one place."

"Sorry, sar, dat you no believe poor old Ching-Ching."

"I am sorry I can't; so get along."

So Ching-Ching, being reduced to an audience of one, took Samson aside, and poured into his ears such a string of wonderful Ching-Ching stories that our dark friend was completely taken off his balance, and wandered about all that evening like a man in a dream.

CHAPTER II.

THE PURSUIT.

The morning brought the wished-for calm, and, although the breakers still rolled heavily, the opening was quite plain, and promised a safe passage to a boat in skillful hands. The men chosen, about thirty in number, were early up and stirring, and provisions for three weeks were rapidly stowed away.

This preparation was made to meet an emergency which might arise either from the prolonged nature of the pursuit, or rough weather which might keep them on the shore. Tom True was to take charge of one boat, and Handsome Harry the other.

Ching-Ching and Samson were up early, too, and gave as much assistance to the preparations as looking on and uttering a few occasional words of advice could be expected to do; and it may be said that the looking on displeased nobody, and the advice troubled only one man, and that Old Cutten.

"I tink dat de bag of biscuit better dis end ob de boat," said Ching-Ching, hanging half over the ship's side.

"I shall put it where I like," growled the seaman.

"Den don't blame me if de capen drowned," said Ching-Ching.

Old Cutten uttered a fierce anathema upon Ching-Ching and all things in and out of China, and went on with his work. Samson joined Ching-Ching.

"You see dat bag ob biscuit, Samson?"

"Yes—I see him," replied the ready Samson.

"Ain't dat enuf to upset dat boat?"

"Sure to, Chingy," said Samson. "Now, Massa Tom, look at dat bag ob biscuit. Old Cutten want to drown everybody."

Now it so happened that, although Ching-Ching's objection had been entirely founded upon guess-work, the bag of biscuits was injudiciously placed, and Tom at once ordered a change of situation. When he was gone, Samson and Ching-Ching grinned in a triumphant manner at Cutten, until he was perfectly frantic.

"Come out ob de boat," said Samson, "and let me get it ready."

"You come into it, and see what I'll do to you," growled Old Cutten.

Samson was about to obey this invitation, when our hero appeared on deck, and ordered the crews in. He then had a few private words with Tom, and beckoned to Samson to follow him into his seat in the stern.

Ching-Ching dropped into the bows like a cat and squatted down. In all probability, if he had been discovered, he would have been sent back to the ship; as it was, Harry did not notice him.

"Give way, men," he said.

Ever in the van, he led the way through the gap, a feat which required no common nerve in such a small boat. The sea hissed and bubbled and roared around him; but he steered straight through, and in a few minutes glided into calm water.

Then he turned to watch the issue of Tom True's attempt. Smiling and confident, his gallant friend stood up in the stern, looking like a chariot-driver of the days of old; and, without one faltering movement, brought his craft through the dangerous passage, alongside that occupied by our hero and his crew.

A few steady strokes carried both boats to the shore, where they were drawn up high and dry.

The stores were lifted out, and among them were discovered two tents; one large, for the men, and the other smaller, for Handsome Harry and Tom. Samson, of course, was to be there, in the capacity of a faithful attendant.

When our hero discovered that Ching-Ching was of the party, he appeared to be rather angry, and asked him what he was doing there.

"Me come to hunt," said Ching-Ching, with a simple smile.

"Hunt what?"

Ching-Ching did not know, but he was equal to the occasion.

"Anything," he said.

"The hunt I am about to be engaged in," said Harry, "will be a stern and desperate piece of work. I am going to hunt men, who will sell their lives dearly."

This was unexpected news to Ching-Ching, and he rolled his eyes about; but he quickly recovered.

"Berry good, sar. Me stop at home and do de cooking."

"Stop where?"

"Wif de tents, sar. All de men be berry glad to go and hunt; me berry glad to stop at home."

"About the best thing you could do with him," said Tom; "he has no arms."

"Only dis rumrella and dis fan," said Ching-Ching.

"Then stay behind," said Harry.

A spot under the lee of the enormous headland was selected to pitch the tents. It was a pretty little bay of white sand, with a narrow entrance, which could be defended in case of emergency. Our readers will, perhaps, understand its advantages better if we describe it as a circular piece cut out of the headland by the action of the sea. When the tide was high, it was cut off from the beach.

The walls of the cliff rose straight and smooth. Attack from above was therefore next to an impossibility, and from the front there was very little more to fear.

The tents were raised and the stores rapidly packed within. Then Samson, on whose instinct our hero now mainly relied, was sent out to find some traces of the men they sought.

He returned in an hour with the information that they had scaled the cliff about half a mile down, and then started off in a northerly direction.

"Walking berry slow, Massa Harry," he said; "sore, stiff, and limp-like. Dey been much knocked about by de sea."

"How long have they been gone?"

"About tree hours."

"Fled when they saw us making preparations to come ashore," said Harry. "We have an easy task before us. Serve out two days' rations to each man, and give them a nip of grog to start with."

Tom had a key to the spirit tap, and, drawing out a liberal supply for each man, he handed them around, totally disregarding Ching-Ching, who placed himself humbly at the bottom of the tent.

"You forget me, Massa True," he said.

"No, I don't. It is because I remember you that I give you no grog now. You told me you did not like it."

"Me change my liking."

"Then change it again," said Tom, putting the key into his pocket. "You will get nothing of this sort out of me."

Ching-Ching retired, defeated, licking his

lips in disappointment and despair. He tried a piteous look, but as that failed too, he gave up all further attempt.

"You will be pretty safe here," said Harry, "and I warn you not to attempt to wander about, or you may get into trouble."

Ching-Ching vowed that he would not even look outside, and, getting the men together, our hero started in pursuit of the captain of the Black Jaguar.

Samson led them to a part where the cliff was less precipitous, and then he pointed out the footsteps of men, evidently very recent.

Following this trail, they speedily reached the summit, and then a most gorgeous panorama burst upon them.

A great lake, with hundreds of islands dotted upon it, lay stretched at their feet. The water was still and glassy, the islands rich in palms and plants and gorgeous flowers. On the left, far away, lay a line of blue mountains; on the right, another range, capped with snow.

"A paradise indeed!" cried Tom.

"It is indeed beautiful," replied Harry; "and, had I but time, I would gladly explore this lovely land. There are no signs of man, no house, no boat, not even a wigwam, and that lake, I am sure, has never been ruffled by an oar. But we must get on now, Samson."

"Straight on, sar," replied Samson, and the men, in high glee, ran down the great slope.

At the bottom they came upon a plain of sand, lying, apparently, between them and the lake. There were faint indentations in it, which Samson said were made by the feet of the men whom they were pursuing.

It was hot work, struggling through the thick sand, but the men bore up, as the banks of the lake promised a cool resting place. But hours passed away, and it seemed no nearer.

"Distance is very deceptive," said Tom. "I could have sworn, when we were on the cliff, that it was almost at our feet."

"We must reach it soon," said Harry. "Why do you pause, Samson?"

"Me lost the track, sar. Try a lilly back sar."

"Very good."

They all turned, and, at the same moment, every man uttered an exclamation of surprise. The beautiful lake was now behind them.

"What is this?" cried Harry; "am I dreaming?"

"Me tink sumfin wrong wif dat lake," said Samson, "for me no see him yesserday."

"I have it," cried Tom; "we have all been fooled by the mirage; we have wasted the best part of a day upon a sandy plain."

"Back!" cried Harry—"back at once, or those vagabonds we seek may seize our boats and escape. They were, no doubt, led astray as we have been, and, finding it out, have returned in a circuitous way. Back, my men; we have not a moment to spare."

So, floundering about in the sand, and bewailing their hard luck, the men turned their steps toward the shore again, where, in the meantime, events of some importance had transpired.

CHAPTER III. 15

DEATH OF CHING-CHING.

Left in charge of the tents, Ching-Ching set to work to appease two things, his thirst and curiosity. The first could have been done by water, but as he wanted something better, he looked about for a gimlet, and, having found one, proceeded to drill a hole through the bottom of the keg containing the spirit.

Before withdrawing the tool he provided himself with a small peg, which he cut from a piece of loose wood lying about. Then taking out the gimlet, he allowed the spirit to flow. With this he appeased his thirst so liberally that he had a coughing fit and went purple in his face.

Thrusting in the peg, he next proceeded to satiate his curiosity, and began to turn over everything in the tent.

"Massa Harry's private bag," he said, taking it up; "not lock, oh, no! Massa Harry not mean enuf to go about wif keys. What hab he got? Brush and comb. I like berry much to take down my pigtail and gib him a brush, but got no time; berrer take de brush and use him anodder time."

The brush was accordingly stowed away under his jacket in some mysterious receptacle up his back. Then he looked with a loving eye upon two clean shirts, and wondered whether they would fit him.

"A clean shirt mus be good," he mused. "I neber hab a shirt in all my life. 'Spose I hab one."

With the supposition came the resolve, and led away by his kleptomania, which seemed to keep him oblivious of all consequences, he doffed his upper garments and put on one of his leader's shirts, with the front down his back. The cuffs came over his knuckles, but these he rolled away up to his elbows, and the tail troubled him a trifle, but this he wisped up about his waist.

Having thus adorned himself, he shut the bag and went round the stores; the bag of biscuits was open and tempting. Provisions might run short one day, and it was as well that he should be prepared; so he stowed about seven pounds up his back to keep company with the hair brush.

He was about to proceed with his investigation, with the object of adding to his spoil, when a whistle fell upon his ear. There was something peculiarly shrill and unpleasant in the sound, and he instinctively felt convinced that danger was afloat.

Ching-Ching might not be very brave, but he had plenty of cunning. Lying down upon the pit of his stomach, he crawled to the mouth of the tent and peeped out.

The aspect which met his gaze was anything but pleasant.

About a dozen Lascars, headed by a good-looking white man, were standing at the entrance of the little sandy bay, surveying the tents with a look of curiosity. The leader, about whom there is no need to make mystery, was Ira Staines, and he was as cool as if he was just meditating a call upon a friend.

"If there's anybody at home," he cried, "come out and fight like men."

No answer. Ching-Ching, with his little eyes gleaming like beads, made preparations for a rush through the foe and scuttling off.

"I'll meet you man to man," said Ira Staines, advancing a few paces. "Come now, don't skulk."

Ching-Ching was now drawn up like a cat making ready for a spring, but he uttered not a word.

"I don't think that anybody is at home," continued Ira, advancing a few paces more; "now come out if you are."

"Somebody moving there," cried a Lascar, whose eyes were very sharp. "Clear out there."

The men scuttled back to the entrance of the bay. Ira never budged an inch.

"Oh, you're a lively lot of duffers," he cried, shaking his fist at them. "Why, there can't be more than a dozen men anyhow."

In his heart he believed that one or both of the tents was full of men, and not caring to risk his life against odds so great, and as little disposed to turn tail, he stood still midway in a doubting mood.

"If some of you don't come out," he cried, drawing a pistol, "I'll fire bang into the thick of you."

He pointed his weapon in the direction of Ching-Ching, who rolled over and disclosed his feet to the view of Ira Staines.

"One at last," he said, drawing back a pace, and, taking aim, he fired.

Ching-Ching uttered a loud shriek, and, stepping out, fell upon his face.

"Hit," said Ira, calmly; and he put his pistol back again.

"Any other gentleman about?" he asked, politely. "No! then I'll come up closer. Oh, you set of curs!"

The Lascars whom he addressed had disappeared. They had been for many hours without food, and hunger had taken the courage out of them. Ira Staines advanced, whistling, with his eyes about him.

He glanced at the tent Ching-Ching had evacuated, and saw it was empty, and one bold look at the other told him it was empty too.

"Only a Chinee," he muttered, contemptuously, kicking him over with his foot; "hit he was, too."

Poor Ching-Ching was rigid, his lower jaw had fallen, and the hands which had been so lately purloining were limp and cold.

"Quite dead," muttered Ira, stooping over him. "What a neat shot it was; right into the heart, I believe, for there's not a drop of blood."

He turned Ching-Ching over two or three times, and sat looking at him, musing.

"Alive a minute or so ago," he said; "but dead now. Gone out in a moment; but gone where? Heaven, I suppose. What's the good of thinking about it?"

He rose up and went into the tent, where he helped himself to a biscuit, which he ate with the keen relish of a hungry man, while he took a look about him.

"Stores from the Belvedere," he muttered. "Ah! they will come in useful to us. Thank you, friend Harry—whatever your other name may be—I only want my lazy curs to help me to carry these good things away. I will look them up. Thunder and lightning! what is this?"

The tent above him had suddenly collapsed, and the heavy mass of canvas fell upon him with irresistible force. He was thrown down upon his back, and then a hand was laid upon his chest, and the voice of the man he supposed to be dead was heard:

"You move only a lilly inch, and I put a berry long knife right through you!"

"Move I can't, if I would," gasped Ira Staines; "and if you don't give me a little air, I shall smother."

"You get no more air from me," returned Ching-Ching, coolly; "so you lie quiet and smudder; if you don't—settle—one, two, sharp—with a ki—ki—ki!"

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE RETURN.

The party returning along the sandy track had a long and painful struggle before they reached the base of the cliff again, and then it was found that they had wandered many miles out of their way.

While pushing forward toward the imaginary lake their spirits had been elevated by hope, and it was not until they were upon the backward track that they truly felt the burden and heat of the day.

In addition to the discomfort produced by the tremendous heat of the sun, a smartish breeze arose, which, in the first place, filled their ears, eyes and nostrils with the exceedingly fine and irritating sand, and, in the second, covered up the trail of the men they pursued.

Finding nothing could be done, they went, as they thought, in a straight direction, but, as we have previously stated, diverged very wide from the mark, and came upon the cliffs several miles from their little camp in the sandy bay.

Still, it was something to walk upon firm ground again, and after a brief halt for refreshing the inner man, they set forward toward home.

For awhile they kept upon the summit of the cliffs, but deep rents and chasms now compelled them to turn aside, and they had to make many detours.

At last they came to a spot where great masses of rock lay strewn about, as if the heavens had rained large stones of all shapes and sizes. Some were round, some were square, and others were long. Some lay flat, others on end, and a few stood upright like darts. In some places they lay about, in others piled up in great heaps as if delivered by some giants from a cart to mend the roads.

This spot of ground was of considerable size, more than a mile wide, and as a walk round meant a considerable amount of additional labor, Harry resolved to cross it.

Bidding the men pick their way carefully and beware of serpents, Harry marched at their head for a few steps, and then a strange object presented itself to his view.

It was upon the summit of one of the pieces of rock, and bore a resemblance to a man's head; but it was so disfigured by paint that it was at first difficult to make out what it really was.

All doubts were, however, speedily set at rest by a most unearthly yell, and immediately every stone became alive with savage figures, holding cleft sticks in their hands, in which were fixed spears for throwing.

"To cover, men!" cried Harry.

Every man crouched behind the rock nearest him, and a cloud of harmless spears flew by—harmless, because they failed to strike; but Harry picked up one which fell near him, and remarked a deep stain at its tip.

"Poisoned!" he said. "A cowardly trick of a cowardly people."

The savages now uttered a chorus of fierce yells, and, by the sound, were drawing nearer. Harry resolved to check them, and rising suddenly to his feet he faced a perfect host of dusky foes.

In a moment every spear-laden stick was raised; but ere an arm could throw a weapon the rifle Harry bore sent its leaden messenger into the head of one of the foremost, who leaped into the air and fell upon his face without a cry.

The sound of the rifle and the fall of the foremost man had a sudden and bewildering effect. Every savage disappeared, as if he had sunk into the ground where he stood. But for the dead man lying near him, Harry might have deemed the whole scene a repetition of the mirage.

He called upon his men to rise and advance a few paces, and peered behind the nearest rock. Nothing there but a hollow in the earth, like a huge rabbit-hole; he passed to the next rock, and found another orifice just large enough to admit a man's body. He passed on a little further, and found the place perfectly honeycombed.

The truth then flashed upon him. He had come upon a tribe of men which once peopled the earth in great numbers, and were generally supposed now to be extinct—viz., cave-men, who fashioned their houses in the earth, and skulked away from the light of day like hyenas.

He stooped down and took a survey of one of these rough houses, and down in the depths of the darkness saw a pair of gleaming eyes.

The temptation to fire came upon him, but he put it aside.

"Poor wretches," he said, "they are very harmless, after all."

He passed on with his men unmolested, and coming to smoother ground, ascended to the summit of the cliff. There a wail of anguish reached his ears.

Turning, he beheld the rocks alive with the savages. Some of them were carrying the dead man away, and the others were standing in attitudes expressive of grief and rage.

They shook their sticks at the white men, and danced forward in a threatening way; but as soon as Harry presented his gun toward them they scuttled away into their holes with a whisk very much like the movements of rabbits. Even the bearers of the dead dropped their burden and hastened to cover; some of them, indeed, heading the movement of retreat.

Samson was highly edified by this spectacle, and the men laughed heartily at it; but none of them deemed how potent that foe was one day to become.

"In another hour it will be dark," said Tom, "and we have at least three miles of rough road to travel."

"Forward!" cried Harry.

The men bent forward to move, but their progress was checked by the boom of a gun out at sea.

"What is that?" said Tom.

"A signal of some sort from the Belvedere," replied Harry, calmly.

"It is a signal of distress," said one.

"No," replied his captain; "the Belvedere will never fire that signal for anything less than a disaster brought on by the power of Providence. The efforts of man we laugh at and despise. Forward!"

"There is a sail in the west," said Tom to him in a whisper, "about two points southward. Looks like a heavy craft."

"I see it," replied Harry; "it is British, I think. We must be on board at once. Shall we not find the beach better traveling?"

"No, it is all loose sand."

Nothing more was said until they arrived at the spot where they had scaled the cliff in the morning. There they paused to take

breath before descending, and at that instant a number of dark figures darted out from the shadow of a rock below and made toward the boats.

"The Lascars of the Black Jaguar!" cried Tom.

"Quick, men," cried Harry, "or all is lost!"

A splendid cheer responded to him, but caution was necessary, as the cliff was very precipitous, and their footsteps could not keep pace with their intentions. The Lascars saw their advantage and gave a shout of triumph.

Darting upon the boats, they began to launch them, and the grating of their keels upon the stones and sand could plainly be heard. It was maddening music to the Belvedere men, and leaping like mountain goats from rock to rock they reached terra firma and rushed toward the foe.

CHAPTER V.

NO SURRENDER.

The Lascars were now well afloat, and, with the hope of getting speedily out of shot, were settling to their oars, but before one could bend to his work a shot from Harry's rifle dropped the man at the tiller howling.

This created a trifle of confusion among them, which he lost no time in taking advantage of, and crying, "Follow me, men," dashed into the water with his cutlass between his teeth.

A few swift strokes and he had got hold of the gunwale of the boat, and raising himself up, he cut the nearest man almost in twain. The Lascars, armed apparently only with knives, dashed onto the other side of the boat, and, of course, upset her. Tom, who had followed his leader's action, now made for the second boat, and the occupants of that plunged into the sea without waiting for him.

They were, however, met by the men of the Belvedere, at least such of them as could swim, and turning back, howling with fury, they made for Harry (who was now sitting upon the keel of the overturned boat) resolved to have his life before they died.

Howling and foaming, they sought to drag him down, but his swift cutlass struck right and left, cleaving a head or shoulder with each stroke, until the water around him had changed its azure blue to a deep red.

His men, full of admiration for their gallant young leader, came up as fast as they could, and completed the work he had so well begun. Only three Lascars succeeded in reaching the shore, and these were cut down by the men who, unable to swim, had remained behind.

Another warning gun from the Belvedere was now heard, and the boat being righted, the men got in and pulled for the gap. The tide was running out, or the passage would have been impossible; but they were favored, and in a few moments Handsome Harry climbed over the side of his gallant ship.

"Enemy bearing down, sir," said Bill Grunt.

"Aye, aye—clear the decks for action!"

"But she is a three-decker, sir."

"What matters—the Belvedere will fight. I have work to be done here, from which I will not turn. No words. Get ready there."

"All U P with us now," said Tom, merrily. "Now, Grunt, make the best of your last quid. If we fire a shot upon that ship, we shall either be blown out of the water, or strung up to a man. She is British!"

"No she ain't, by Jingo! There goes her flag—Russian!"

"English built, but Russian manned."

"What is she doing now?"

"Can't say; there she goes, they are lowering a boat."

One of the frigate's cutters came bearing down upon them, and pulling up within a good pistol-shot, the officer hailed the Belvedere in excellent English:

"Ship ahoy, there!" he cried.

"Ahoy to you!" cried Bill Grunt.

"Can I come aboard?"

"No!" thundered Harry.

"Who and what are you?" asked the Russian.

"English—and this is the Belvedere."

"Government ship?"

"No."

"Why are you cruising about armed, then?"

"On my own affairs."

"I must come aboard of you," insisted the officer.

"You cannot. If you come a foot nearer I will blow you out of the water."

This threat, given in a tone which promised that it would be carried out, had the effect of sending the boat back to the ship. Then a gun was shotted and fired at the Belvedere.

It fell short, and the three-decker bore up a little nearer. Harry stood his ground, and loading his gun, waited for the foe.

"Madness!" said Tom.

"Right off his head," growled Bill Grunt.

"Tom," said Harry, "what is the matter with you?"

"Oh, nothing. I am only trying to balance my accounts in this world; but there's a heavy list against me."

"You won't die yet, Tom."

"That fellow will sink us with his first broadside."

"Not he. Can't you see he is running into a trap?"

"No, I don't."

"Do you see that little bit of foam between him and us?"

"Yes."

"You know what it means?"

"Rocks, I should say."

"Right, Tom; and the cluster outside this bank. He does not see them, and—you know the rest."

"So that's what made you stand your guns?"

"No; I have only just perceived it. Fire a shot or two to keep his attention upon us."

This was done, and the second struck the bulwark of the frigate. This daring deed evidently excited a great deal of astonishment, for a dozen guns at least could be traced bent upon the Belvedere.

In derision of his puny enemy, the Russian hauled down his flag, and came on without showing his bunting. Harry, through his glass, could see the men at the guns, ready, as they thought, to blow him to matchwood.

"Give him another shot!" cried our hero.

It sped over the sea and struck him in the bows. The Russians shouted in derisive glee, but two of their men had fallen to shout no more.

The Belvedere was indeed a puny craft compared to the huge bulk of its antagonist; and even if our hero had fled, would have had a poor chance of escape. This was the reason the Russians thought that our hero kept at anchor.

The Russian captain, annoyed at the audacity of his foe, resolved not to fire upon him, but simply to run him down.

"We shall ride over him," he said, "as if he were a straw floating on the bosom of the deep. Cut down every man who attempts to board."

The words were barely out of his mouth when the frigate struck upon the sunken rocks and heeled over upon her side. The mizzen-mast snapped in twain and the top-rigging fell in a confused mass overboard.

The shock was terrific and every man was thrown down upon the deck. In an instant the captain was again upon his feet.

"Cut away there!" he cried; "clear away the wreck and lower the boats. We must attack this fellow."

But the boats had suffered much. Four had been hauled from the davits, three were stove in, and the others were high upon the upper side of the ship, out of reach for immediate launching. The guns were also unserviceable, for half were under water, and the others, on the upper side, had fallen back from the port-holes, with their muzzles pointing to the sky.

The Russian captain saw his peril and bowed before it. He was at the mercy of the captain of the Belvedere.

"We shall get no quarter from such a piratical foe," he said, "but let us die like men, with our faces to him."

The men shouted and gathered upon the side facing the Belvedere; but our hero had given orders to weigh anchor, and he now stood toward them, not with guns ready to belch forth fire, but with port-holes closed,

"A blind, a subterfuge!" muttered the Russian, savagely.

The Belvedere came within speaking distance and dropped her anchor again. Handsome Harry hailed them.

"Have you got much damage?" he asked.

The Russian captain marveled at this unexpected address, which seemed like one friend hailing another. He, however, hastened to reply.

"No; I think we have only grounded on a sloping rock."

"In that case the next tide will take you off. But have your anchors ready or you will drift on to the great bank facing you."

"Thank you; but who the deuce are you?"

"My men call me Captain Harry."

"What are you, a cruiser?"

"Yes."

"On your own account, eh?"

"If you mean, am I a pirate? I answer 'No;' but I am cruising in search of a bitter foe."

"You must be a generous fellow or you would have knocked us to pieces."

"Thank you," said Harry; "it will soon be dark. I will anchor here for the night, in case you need assistance."

A chorus of thanks replied to him, and a little later darkness fell upon the scene.

There was no moon, but the great hull of the frigate could be faintly seen standing out against the stars, and the noise of men clearing away wreck and preparing for the time when the high tide would float them off was heard until a late hour.

Handsome Harry was in his cabin about midnight, in close consultation with Tom True, when a knock came at the door, and the knocker being desired to enter, Samson came in.

"Massa Harry," he said, "I want a boat and a few men."

"What for, Samson?"

"To go on shore, sar."

"It would be madness to try to run the gap in the darkness. What do you want it for?"

"To find Old Chingy. We hab forgot him, sar—lef alone."

"Of course," said Tom. "I thought we were short of something—and it is the precious Chinaman. We left him in charge of the tents."

"And there he must remain until the morning," said Harry; "a boat would only be swamped and wrecked."

"But poor Ole Chingy die," urged Samson.

"I hope not; but if he does, we can better spare him than a dozen men. Nothing can be done to-night, Samson."

With a sorrowful face, Samson left the cabin, and walking to the bows of the Belvedere, leaned over and looked plaintively at the shore.

He remembered the natives and the Lascars, and pictured to himself his own companion, Ching-Ching, in the hands of a foe, struggling for his life. It was too much for him. There was a cry in his ears like the Chinaman shrieking for help; and, although it was only the wind sighing among the breakers, Samson resolved to obey, and dropping over the side, he swam toward the breakers, hoping to find the gap and make his way to the shore.

CHAPTER VI.

ASHORE.

Duty calls us back to Ching-Ching, whom we left in what must be considered a peculiar position. He had taken up a post, which showed his generalship, on the legs of Ira Staines, so that he might keep a watch upon the upper movements of his body.

"You move," he said again and again, "and I run dis berry long knife right true you."

Now, Ching-Ching had no knife—no weapon of any sort; the most terrible thing he had about him was the hair-brush which he had purloined from his leader's bag, and that could never be of much service. While uttering his fearful threats he had his umbrella in one hand and his fan in the other.

Ira Staines lay apparently motionless and quite resigned to his captivity. Breathing was a little difficult at first, but he soon got used to it, and made no further complaint,

and thus the pair remained for an hour or more.

"I say," cried Ira, breaking the long silence, "how long are you going to carry on this precious game?"

"Until my friends come back," replied Ching-Ching.

"Where are they gone?"

"To cut the throats of all your friends, and den dey come and finish off you."

"Thank you; but if they don't come back before they catch my friend, the captain of the Jaguar, my neck is pretty safe. I say, can't you let a fellow sit up?"

"Oh! yes," replied Ching-Ching, bantering; "berry much likely, so; ki-ki, oh! you berry clebber, sar; sit up, stand up, fight and run away."

"On my word, I won't offer to strike a blow," cried Ira.

"What your word fetch when you at home?" asked Ching-Ching.

"Do you mean to say that I'm a liar?" growled Ira.

"I nebber mean to accuse you ob de trufe," replied Ching-Ching, evasively. "You move a peg and down come dis knife."

Now Ira Staines had just succeeded in getting his eye close to the very smallest of small holes in the canvas above him, and by this means he saw that the threat about the knife was all bunkum, and that he had nothing more than a dig in the ribs from an umbrella to fear.

A resolute man, he acted in a moment. His knife was out of his belt, and a slash was made through the covering about him. His arm was free, but ere he could get his head out a powerful grasp was put upon his wrist.

It was so powerful that it seemed to him that every bone and sinew was being crushed to a pulp, and with a howl of anguish, torn from his very heart, he dropped his knife. Then a hand drew his pistols from his belt, and he was in the power of his enemy.

"Dat all right now," said Ching-Ching, coolly. "Come out and sit against that piece of rock, eh? Now I watch till my friends come back, with a ki—ki—ki—ko——"

"Do you call that singing?" demanded Ira Staines, rubbing his wrist wrathfully.

"Me not much of singer," replied Ching-Ching, modestly, "but my mudder sang like an angel. All the birds shut up when she walk abroad, and blush for shame. Big cockatoo listen to her, and felt so shamed ob him squeak dat all de feathers ob him tail drop out."

"Your mother must have been something peculiar," said Ira. "Is she alive?"

"No," replied Ching-Ching, wiping a corner of his eye—"she pass away after severe attack ob measles!"

"She left a strong son behind her," said Ira. "There's nothing of you to look at, and yet, what a grip you have."

"Me pretty strong," replied Ching-Ching; "but noting to my farder. He live in berry big house in Pekin, wif de tea-trees growing all ober de grounds. Berry rich, berry strong, and berry handsome, my farder."

"Is he alive?" demanded Ira.

"No—he dead. When mudder pass away he pass away, too; they lub each other so berry much."

"An affecting story," said Ira; "but what a liar you are."

"I stop you from lying if you say dat again," said Ching-Ching, cocking a pistol and taking deliberate aim.

"I meant no offence," said the other, coolly; "so don't rile up."

A noise upon the shore checked further conversation, and each, with his eyes upon the other, listened intently.

"My friends and your friends," said Ira, "having a little friendly meeting. I am afraid it will end in a quarrel."

"Your friends get de worst ob dat," said Ching-Ching.

Ira could see a little of what was going on, which we have already described; but he resolved that his face should be no index to Ching-Ching, who sat with his back to the sea and kept his eyes upon the other continually.

The launch of the boats—the attack, defence and destruction of the Lascars were watched by Ira Staines with an unmoved face, so that the Chinaman got no clew. He was on thorns, but he dare not turn, lest the prisoner might spring upon him or strike him down.

"Your friends got berry quiet suddenly," said Ching-Ching.

"Yes," replied the other, "they have all gone home!"

"And my friends?"

"All gone on board the Belvedere, leaving you and I to enjoy each other's society. Ah! what is that, a gun—and a big ship in the offing. Your friends have got into trouble, indeed. Exit Belvedere."

"You open your mouth berry wide," said Ching-Ching.

"I open it truthfully. A three-decker is upon them. Look for yourself. Don't be afraid of me. Back a few paces and take a peep."

Ching-Ching did so, obtained a brief glimpse of the stranger, and returned to his post.

"Poof," he said. "Massa Handsome Harry make nothing ob dat. Not more dan one moufful. When he lick dat chap he soon return for Ching-Ching. Just hang you, and go back again."

"He must be sharp, then," said Ira; "for in half an hour it will be dark. Confound the fellow! Everything seems to favor him. That ship has grounded."

Ching-Ching chuckled with glee.

"I tell you so, sah; and you do not believe me," he said, "wif de ki—ki—ki; down in Pekin way, ko—ko—ko. It was a lubly day, kum—kum—kum. When ship sink on de shore, ki—ki; and nebber rise no more, ko—ki—kum!"

"You are a bit of a poet, too," said Ira.

"Not much," returned Ching-Ching; "but my farder at Pekin wrote a cart-load, and ——"

"Ha! never mind what he did with it. There goes your friend to knock that craft to pieces, now that he has got into a fix. No, dashed if they are not making friendly signals. What an ass! I would not have left two timbers together."

"You hit a man while him down?" suggested Ching-Ching.

"Same as you did me," said Ira.

"Oh, no," returned Ching-Ching. "I only hit you afore you get up!"

"A distinction without a difference," growled Ira.

Another silence followed, and before it was broken darkness fell upon the scene—a darkness so dense that the two men could scarcely see each other. Ching-Ching then spoke.

"I got berry sharp eyes; so don't move, please, sah."

"I suppose your father in Pekin had very good eyes?" said Ira, sarcastically.

"Berry good," replied Ching-Ching.

"And your mother?"

"One eye berry good; de oder closed up by my farder arter he take a lilly drop ob rum," said Ching-Ching.

This revelation shut up Ira for the time, but his mind was busy. He was trying to form some plan of escape without risk to life or limb.

Ching-Ching had now been some hours on the watch without giving out any signs of fatigue; and, as far as looks went, it appeared that he could go on for an indefinite period. Ira Staines felt that he would tire out and fall asleep before the Chinaman succumbed to fatigue.

Still he was resolved to escape—but how?

Feeling cautiously about him, his hand lighted upon a lump of loose rock about the size of a cocoanut. Here was a weapon, if he could only use it quickly and well.

Ching-Ching was before him, standing out in slight relief against the starry sky. One dexterous throw, and the thing would be done.

"I say, my friend," he said, "if you let me go, I know where to find a bag of gold. You shall have it."

"Bodder your gold!" returned Ching-Ching; "me no want it."

"Then take that!" cried Ira Staines, and he hurled the stone with deadly aim.

It struck Ching-Ching in the chest, and doubling him up like a portfolio, he rolled over without uttering a sound. Ira Staines sprang to his feet with a cry of exultation and rushed toward the entrance to the sandy bay.

He reached it, and liberty was before him, when a dark form uprose, two strong arms were thrown around his waist, and a voice cried:

"Stop a lilly minute, sar. What make you in such a berry great hurry?"

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY AND THE RUSSIANS.

The morrow's light revealed the Russian frigate riding easily at anchor within a few hundred yards of the rock on which she had almost perished. As soon as those on board could see the Belvedere the colors were run up to the masthead and three guns fired by way of a salute.

Harry was aroused from his slumbers, and, on coming upon deck, directed Bill Grunt to reply. The old bo'sun obeyed orders with alacrity, for, as he said, "Somehow he thought the Russian lubbers had a little true grit at the bottom of 'em."

The fact was, Bill had doubted the policy of his leader with regard to the foe, and, talking it over with Old Cutten during the middle watch, they had arrived at the conclusion that no "furriners" could be trusted, and that these "Rooshan" beggars would repay the kindness they had received by seizing the earliest opportunity to blow the Belvedere bang out of the water.

The discovery of their better intentions melted the old boatswain, and, with an amended view of "furriners" in general, he favored them with three blank cartridges. A boat then put off from the stranger, with a gentlemanly young fellow in the uniform of a first lieutenant in the stern sheets. The sailors pulled smartly, and in a few moments the officer stepped on board the Belvedere.

"Is your gallant captain on board?" he asked, looking about him.

"I am he," replied Harry, stepping forward.

"Permit me to introduce myself—Lieutenant Schamoff, of the Veda," said the Russian in perfect English.

"Very pleased to receive you," returned Harry.

"And may I ask the favor of your name?"

"I wish to remain simply as the captain of the Belvedere."

The Russian shrugged his shoulders and laughed easily.

"As you will," he said. "I am simply charged with an invitation to breakfast with Captain Droitsky, of the Veda. You will also please to bring as many of your officers as you care to."

"I do not care to meet strangers," said Harry, hesitatingly.

"Perhaps you doubt our honor?" interposed the Russian, quickly.

"Oh, no, I have no notion of men—especially of your country—being so base," said Harry.

"Thank you," returned the Russian.

"I will attend you at once, with an officer and a faithful attendant of mine," said our hero. "Grunt, ask Mr. True to come here."

When Tom True came on deck, aroused from sweet morning slumbers, he accepted the invitation to breakfast on board the Veda as frankly as it had been given; and then inquiries were made for Samson.

But he was, of course, nowhere to be found, and Bill Grunt hit the nail on the head when he declared that it was his belief that he had gone to look for that "China chap."

"For I niver did see two coves cotton together as they do," he said; "and if they cottoned a little more, one on 'em must bust from an overplush of affection."

"When the tide turns," said Harry, "take a boat and go ashore to look after them. Be well armed and vigilant, in case of treachery."

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Bill; "but I think we've squashed most of the beggars."

"One is free," muttered Harry; "and were he dead, all the rest might live, for aught I care."

He and Tom True then got into the boat with the Russian officer and were pulled back to the Veda. Captain Droitsky, a tall, handsome man, received them gracefully and affably.

Tom took a look about the deck, and found everything in excellent order, the crew neat, the guns well appointed and the strictest order.

"You have a well-appointed craft here," he said.

"English-built, by English hands," replied Lieutenant Schamoff. "Ah! you men of the lonely isle, you know not how to use the talent which runs wild in your country. We have just sense enough to make use of it."

"A little is left for home consumption," said Tom, laughing.

"Much," returned the other. "There is the signal for breakfast! Your gallant leader has already disappeared."

The breakfast was splendid. On the table were preserved luxuries from every land; and some dozen officers sat down to partake of it. They could all speak English—as indeed it appeared nine-tenths of the men on board could—and many a good joke and repartee were exchanged, Tom True coming out in brilliant colors.

"I have to apologize to you," said Captain Droitsky to our hero, "for mistaking your character."

"Not at all," returned Harry, smiling; "for even now you do not know it."

"No; but I can guess shrewdly."

"Guess, then," said Harry.

"You are an English gentleman wandering about the seas in pursuit of your own pleasure."

"I am an English gentleman," said Harry, "but I seek no pleasure. The work I have in hand is very serious."

"Pardon the question—I am idly curious—are you commissioned by your government?"

"No."

"Then by any merchant?"

"No. I am alone; an outcast of my country. And yet I have wronged no man."

"Strange!"

"But true. The end I seek is the avenging of a wrong—the bare thought of which rouses my blood and embitters my present pleasure. To endeavor to recount it would rouse such passion as would show but ill presence here. But I am no pirate."

"I can understand that. Pray keep your mystery; and, remember, if ever you stand in need of a friend, and Captain Droitsky is at hand, I shall consider it a personal slight if you fail to call upon him."

"I accept your friendship, cordially," said Harry; and then the two shook hands.

The port-holes of the cabin commanded a view of the shore, and our hero, now looking through, beheld the boat of the Belvedere returning with Samson and Ching-Ching, with a stranger between them at the bow. As the boat drew nearer he could perceive that the stranger was bound.

A thought flashed through his mind, and he arose to his feet.

"Will you pardon me?" he said. "Yonder boat brings something which I think concerns me intimately. My men have a prisoner."

"Can it be he?" cried Tom, springing up.

"Pray accept the use of my glass," said the Russian; "you will find it tolerably good."

It was more than that—it was the best glass our hero had ever looked through; and by its aid he easily made out the features of Ira Staines, calm and immovable in his trouble.

"It is not the man!" Harry cried, impatiently. "Shall we never meet?"

"It is that rascally mate of his," said Tom—who also had been watching the boat—"cool as a cucumber."

"Is he connected with the Black Jaguar?" asked the Russian.

"Yes. Do you know the vessel?"

"Very well. I have been chasing it for some time. We have a long account to settle with it."

"But not such an account as mine," said Handsome Harry, bitterly. "I can never rest until its owner and I meet face to face, and then——"

Volumes could not express the full meaning of the look which passed over his face, and the Russian captain mentally congratulated himself upon not being the object of Harry's pursuit.

"I should like to see this cool Yankee rascal," he said, and Harry at once gave his assent. One of the officers went on, and a gun was fired to attract Bill Grunt's attention. Then a flag was waved as a signal that he was to pull to the Veda.

Bill had his doubts—Bill always had—

and he would have disobeyed the order but for Samson's declaring that his leader had just come on deck and was leaning over the ship's side.

"That's enough," Bill said. "If he's there, safe and sound, I needn't be afraid to go. Pull away, you lubbers."

"Dat right," added Ching-Ching; "pull away."

"You don't pull much," said one of the sailors, looking at him with a wrathful gleam in his eye.

"No, sar," amiably answered Ching-Ching; "me so berry weak in de pulling muscles—all my family de same. When de great mandarin lose him principal jackass, he no longer able to ride to market to buy corn for his family, so he put my farder into de cart—my farder dat live so long at Pekin—and tell him to pull——"

"Dat worse dan slabery," broke in Samson.

"Berry much worse," said Ching-Ching. "'Gee up,' say de mandarin; my farder try to pull, but he can't—no pull in him. 'Git 'long,' cried de mandarin, wid his face de color ob a rose—'do you want to keep me here all night?'"

"Dat mandarin berry brutal," said Samson.

"Berry," replied Ching-Ching, slyly rubbing his nose. "At last my farder got away, and took de mandarin to market, whar he buy a lot ob rice, and off dey start home again. My farder ax de mandarin to take a short cut; so dey strike 'cross lonely road, whar nobody ebar git along, and half way my farder stick fast. 'Get along do,' shouts mandarin. 'Can't,' gasps my farder, and den he roll up bof eyes, and die atween de shafts. De mandarin was too proud to go home hisself, so he sit dere eating rice until it was all gone; den he starve, and when two years gone by, anoder mandarin come by, and find him skeleton and my farder skeleton. So he bury dem bof, and tell me nebber to pull."

"How dat chile learn what your farder say to mandarin?" asked Samson with a puzzled air. "If dey bof die in a lonely place, how dere words come to you?"

"De second mandarin tell me de words; but he no tell me how he git 'em," said Ching-Ching, innocently; "and me never thought to ax."

"P'r'aps dat mandarin a liar," returned Samson. "P'r'aps your farder not try to pull."

"Oh, no! he berry fond ob hard work," said Ching-Ching, "like me."

A general grunt announced a disbelief in this statement, and Bill Grunt—whose incredibility had been most marked during the relation—stood up, and thus addressed Ching-Ching:

"I say, mister, how many fathers have you got?"

"Dat," replied Ching-Ching, "hab been de great problerum ob my life—me not know. Do you know all yours?"

This question, asked with all the innocence of a babe, raised a roar of laughter against Bill, and he sat down disgusted.

"Pull away, will you?" he growled. "Can't you see that the capen's got his eye on you?"

"Oh, in course," muttered one of the sailors—"a fatherly eye."

"I've got my eye on you, you beggar," said Bill Grunt, promptly fixing upon the wrong man. "I'll tan your hide when I get you on board, and stop your grog for a month."

"Lor', sir, I niver thought of sech a thing," pleaded the man.

"Pull away," roared Bill, "and don't try to gammon me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW REVELATIONS OF IRA STAINES.

"So this is our Yankee friend," said the Russian captain, as Ira Staines stepped on board, guarded by Samson and Ching-Ching.

"At your service, gentlemen," replied the Yankee, calmly.

"Let me take a good look at you," continued Captain Droitsky. "Ah! I thought so! Have we not met before?"

"Many times," was the reply.

"At the gaming tables of Montanerca?"

"Yes," replied Ira; "luck was in your favor, and you came back to your ship. It went against me, and I had to join the Black Jaguar to escape a prison. One up, and one down—nothing more."

"A cool rascal," said the Russian to Harry; "but useful material on board a craft, if you could only trust him."

"I think so, too," answered Harry; "too much pluck for the yard-arm."

"Will you give him to me?"

"If he wishes to come; let us give him his choice."

Then, turning to Ira, he said:

"Will you remain here, or come on board the Belvedere?"

"It matters little where I swing," answered the Yankee, coolly; "only do not keep me in suspense."

"Are you sure that I intend to hang you?" asked Harry.

"Well, perhaps you are going to shoot or drown me. Whichever it is, go at it at once. I can't bear wasting time."

"Is this mere bravado, or real courage?"

"Call it what you like," said Ira; "it will be all the same when I am gone. I took a hand in a game, and never held a trump from beginning to end. You ran the Jaguar ashore, you spiflicated the crew, and that blessed Chinaman got me under canvas, so that I couldn't sail; and if he had been made of anything softer than rhinoceros hide, I must have knocked a hole in him."

"It would have knocked a hole in my farder," said Ching-Ching.

"Or any other man," added Ira. "Then I was nigh upon clear away, when up comes that cursed nigger, and holds me like grim Death until this tea-pot got some of the tent rope round me. So from first to last I never held a leading card—and give in."

"A berry sensible young man," said Ching-Ching, addressing Samson.

"I've only one thing to ask before I die," said Ira.

"What is that?" asked Harry.

"Let me have one full and free kick at that grinning Chinaman before I die," said the Yankee.

"I dare say you will have many," returned Harry, "if you come on board the Belvedere. Cut away his bonds, Samson."

"Cut 'em, sar?" asked Samson.

"Yes; set him free."

"He berry slippery cuss, sar."

"Do you think that I am afraid of any one man?" asked Harry, contemptuously. "Set him free. Now, which will you join—the Veda or the Belvedere?"

"The Belvedere forever," cried Ira, throwing up his hat. "Here's at you, for life or death. Take me as I stand, and make the most of me."

"Beware of treachery," said Harry, warningly. "Remember, if I once detect it, you forfeit your life."

"I never play a game without being prepared to stand the losing," replied Ira. "Now, captain, if you could give me a bit of something to eat."

"Go forward, and I will send you something," said Captain Droitsky; "and perhaps the others can make something of what we have left below."

Samson, Ching-Ching and Bill Grunt went below, where they regaled themselves to their heart's content. A man went with them, by the order of Harry, who said:

"That Chinaman is a born thief; he will take anything that is handy; but he can't help it."

So the servants sent down kept a strict eye upon the Chinaman; and on ushering the party on deck, solemnly declared that he had touched nothing but bread and meat with his hands.

"Dat berry true," assented Ching-Ching; "me always keep from picking and stealing wif my fingers."

"You can return to the Belvedere," said Harry to Bill Grunt. "Take the American with you, and return in an hour for Tom True and myself."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I ask your pardon, captain," said Ira Staines, giving our hero a naval salute; "but I wanted a favor of you just now."

"Yes—before you died."

"I know, captain; but as I'm not to die, you needn't stop the favor. Let me kick the Chinaman?"

"I see no particular reason for it."

"But one kick; I won't ask for more, and I swear that I will never take another kick without asking your leave."

"What do you say, Tom?" said Harry.

"Oh, a kick won't hurt the beggar!" replied Tom.

"More likely to do him good," added the Russian captain. "He is a very knowing-looking rascal."

"Kick away, then," said Harry. "Remember, one kick only."

"Thankee, captain," said Ira, and he turned to execute his task.

Ching-Ching at that moment was bowing very politely to some of the Russian officers, as a needful ceremony prior to taking his departure. The attitude was favorable to Ira's desires, and rushing forward, he bestowed a kick upon the Chinaman which fairly lifted him into the air.

Down he came into a sitting posture, and his fall was followed by a perfect hail-storm of knives and forks and other things, which fell from beneath his capacious jacket.

"Hello! what's this?" cried Captain Droitsky, rushing forward.

Harry and Tom came forward, too, the former with a very wrathful face. Ching-Ching sat still, with a wonderful expression upon his face.

"Here, where's my servant?" cried Captain Droitsky.

The wretched man came forward with a pallid face, and stood tremblingly before his master.

"I thought you kept an eye upon this fellow?"

"I never took my eyes off him, sir, from the moment he entered until he left," replied the man.

Another servant corroborated this, vowing earnestly that he, too, had kept an eye upon Ching-Ching throughout, and seen him take nothing.

"It is very odd," said Captain Droitsky. "I do not understand it."

Ching-Ching now volunteered a little explanation.

"P'r'aps," he muttered, "it a lilly joke ob somebody. Massa Grunt berry fond ob lilly joke. P'r'aps he put dese tings up Ching-Ching's back when he not looking."

"I'm darned if I did," roared Bill Grunt; "you don't catch me playing jokes o' that sort."

"Who can it be, den?" asked Ching-Ching, with a puzzled look.

"You cannot expect us to believe," said Captain Droitsky, "that all these things were put up your back without your knowing it. Let me see, here are about two dozen knives with forks to match, a soup-ladle, the stopper of a pickle-bottle, and a sauce-boat. Have you anything more?"

"Dere may be sumfin else," murmured Ching-Ching.

"Shake him," said Harry, "and shake the beggar well."

Bill Grunt and Ira Staines volunteered for this work, and the good shaking they gave the Chinaman brought forth half a loaf of bread, two German sausages, the top of a stilton cheese, the handle of a tureen and a sugar basin.

As these articles showered upon the deck broad grins became universal, but both Captain Droitsky and Harry were very angry.

"I have a good mind to pitch him into the sea," cried our hero.

"Please remember, sar," said Ching-Ching, who had resumed his sitting posture, "dat me not convicted yet. No judge—dat is, good judge—sentence a poor man without good evidence."

"What more evidence do you want, you confounded thief?"

"Nobody see me take 'em, sar; two men swar dat I do not take 'em, sar. Me berry innocent, sar."

"Oh, send him on board," said Captain Droitsky, turning on his heel, laughing; "I wish you joy of such a treasure."

"How on earth did the fellow stow them away?" said Tom True.

"I have no notion," returned Harry; "but if he does not mend his manners I will break his head."

"He has done us good service; he captured Staines, who, I think, will turn out a good man."

"Is Staines the fellow's name?"

"Yes, Ira Staines, he gave to me. I do not suppose that it is his real one; but that need not trouble us."

"Not at all. I wonder how that devilish Chinaman got those things up his back."

The explanation of the mystery we lay before our readers. As the boat pulled toward the Belvedere, Samson crept up to the side of Ching-Ching, and whispered:

"Berry handy feet ob yourn, Ole Chingy."

"Berry," replied the Chinaman; "dey stand afore me, and look me full in de face. I put my lilly foot behind and feel about like elephant's trunk. Berry good feet mine; but nothing like my farder's."

CHAPTER IX.

KEEPING A BIRTHDAY.

Months have passed, and the Belvedere is still afloat upon the sea. With a cloud of canvas bellying out from her topmast, she flies before a stiff breeze, dashing the water in glittering spray to the right and left.

On her deck walks our hero, gloomy and sad. The months have passed wearily to him, foiled in every way in his pursuit. From Ira Staines he had learned that the captain of the Black Jaguar was familiar with the coast upon which he had been thrown; that a path lay across a fertile country to another depot of the pirate band, whence he could easily find—with the money at his command—another ship and another crew.

To this depot they had hastened with all speed, but the road by sea lay round a huge promontory, and when they arrived it was too late. The nest was still warm, but the bird was gone. There were signs of hasty departure among the rows of huts under the palm trees, but nothing of value was left behind, nor any clew to guide the pursuers on their way.

"He had a companion ship—the Vulture—here," said Ira, "and a crew as numerous as that which we lost. He has escaped and has been here, or we should have found them obeying orders and awaiting his coming."

Aye! it must be true. He was once more free, cruising about the sea to work his deadly will.

But where was the Vulture?

That was the problem to be solved.

Previous to parting with the Veda, the Russian captain had handsomely insisted upon giving our hero such stores as he required, and therefore the Belvedere, being well found in everything, had no need to put in anywhere for some time.

Weeks fled by, cruising here and there, with no sign of the Vulture or its captain. The stores had diminished, and now, as Handsome Harry paces the deck, he broods over the necessity of putting into some safe port to obtain stores.

There was no little risk in this; but he had run such risks before, and he must run them again, or give up his pursuit. Anything in his eyes was preferable to this, so he gave word to steer for the island of Santa Chardo.

This insignificant patch of earth has scarcely found a place upon the most modern maps; but it is well known to a large number of adventurers of all nations. It is a very snug little spot, under an insignificant republican rule, which permits the strongest to rule the day. Right has long been buried—Might reigns supreme.

"I have the pass of Don Salvo," said Harry; "and if he is known there—as most likely he is—all is well."

"I know the spot, capen," said Ira Staines, who was standing near; "and the name of old Salvo is pretty well known there. The arch villain has dealings with most of the devil's dens down South."

"Who talks of devil's dens?" cried Tom, gayly, as he came up the companion.

"I do," said Ira; "and I say that Santa Chardo is one of them. Talk of true freedom and liberty of opinion—that's the place for it. Daggers, knives and whittlers—a man dead, and nobody ever asking his name. I've seen them lying about like skittles without a sticker-up."

"You seem to have been in most places," returned Tom; "and yet you cannot be more than thirty."

"I am under," replied Ira; "but I began life young, played the man when I was but

a boy, and paid the penalty with a blunted life and a heart of stone."

"Are you sure your heart is stone?"

"I think so. It has not been moved as it used to be for years. Our capen here stirred it up a bit when he saved my life; but it was a flint that only gave out sound when it was struck—there wasn't a spark of fire."

"I've got a complaint to lay afore you, capen," said Bill Grunt, emerging from below with a face in a flame, "and it's agin them two chaps, Ching-Ching and Samson."

"What's the matter now?" asked Harry. "But stay—don't trouble me with it; my mind is burdened with other things. Mr. True will look into it."

He walked aft, and Tom, seating himself upon a barrel, established himself as a court of inquiry.

"Now, then, Grunt," he said, "what is it?"

Ira Staines, with an amused face, took a piece of stick and a knife from his pocket and began to whittle. Bill Grunt, having wetted the palm of his hand as an assistance to the toil of story-telling, poured forth his plaint.

"Why, look ye here, Mr. True," he said, "it's well beknown that every man's house ashore is his castle, and so is his locker aboard. Nobody ain't got no right to be poking into it 'cept the rightful owner."

"So far, all is well," said Tom, gravely; "proceed."

"Mayhap you've noticed," continued Bill, "that me and Old Cutten is a bit matey; we've took to each other, bein' of a sootable dispersition partly, and partly because we are related. His mother's first wife was second cousin to my haunt."

"The nearness of such a tie is a sufficient warranty for the closest friendship," said Tom.

"Thanky, sir, for your good opinion," returned Bill. "Well, sir, this is Cutten's birthday, which he is forty-seven, and tomorrer he'll be rising forty-eight. He tells me the other day of the event comin' off, and ses I, 'Cutten, old boy,' I ses, 'we'll keep the memory of that day green with a bottle of Jamayca rum, which I've had by me mellering for more than a year.'"

"The sentiment does credit to your heart, and the economy in the matter of rum shows considerable strength of mind," said Tom.

"Well, sir," pursued Grunt, "half an hour ago, we bein' both orf duty, meets below to celebrate the event I've mentioned. I uncorks the bottle, and that cork did come out uncommon easy, and passes it over to him. 'Take a good sip,' I ses—'a good un while you are about it.'"

"Very generous of you, Grunt."

"Which we ought to be at sich times, sir. Well, Cutten up with the bottle, and I hear it gurgling down his throat, when all of a sudden he dashes that bottle down and rolls about like a man in a fit. 'Wot's up?' I cries. He couldn't answer only in sorts of gaspers, and holds on to his stomach as if he was afraid of blowing up. 'I'm poisoned!' he ses at last; and then I smells a rat. I up with the bottle and tastes myself, and if ever there was a lot of muck under a cork, it was there."

"Somebody had changed the rum for something else."

"That's it, sir; and I think it come out of this bottle. Here it is, with a label on it, 'Old Jeremy Diddler's Sarsaparilla.' It smells jist like the stuff in the bottle."

"No doubt it is the same," said Tom, rubbing his mouth with his hand. "Have you any clew to the perpetrators?"

"The who, sir?"

"Those who did it."

"Why, it's Ching-Ching and Samson, of course."

"But why 'of course?' Have you any proof?"

"Yes, sir; Samson's springy, and Ching-Ching is very drunk. I accused 'em of it, and Ching-Ching larfed and said it was his birthday. Blarm them, they ain't got no cheek at all!"

"And where is Cutten?"

"He is still rolling about and turning up his eyes. He's got a twister in the innards this time, I can tell you, sir."

"Send Ching-Ching and Samson to me."

But there was no need for them to be sent for, as they both now appeared on deck and came toward Tom—Samson with

straight steps, but Ching-Ching a little wild and uncertain in his movements.

"Massa Tom," said Ching-Ching, steadying himself with his umbrella, "I've got a 'plaint to lay afore you."

"What is it?"

"Me been berry ill for a long time," said Ching-Ching.

"Berry ill," murmured Samson.

"Took bad in de back," pursued Ching-Ching, "bad in de front, bad in de sides, bad all ober; jis as my uncle was when he chew de pound ob opium for a wager."

"He's got an uncle now," said Bill Grunt, scornfully.

"I hab two," returned Ching-Ching. "Well, sir, I took bad, and to get better I hab a bottle ob Mister Jeremy Old Diddler's Sarsaparilla. Dis I put in my locker, when some tief come and change it for dirty rum."

"Oh, come, none of that!" said Bill Grunt, as if he had borne enough, and was not going to stand any more of it. "You ain't a-going to come the old un over me that way. Look here, Mr. True, you can't believe that gammon."

"There are two sides to the question, it seems," replied Tom, gravely, rising, "and I must take time to consider my decision."

"Massa Tom berry just man," said Ching-Ching.

"Berry just," echoed Samson.

"You're a darned thief!" cried Bill Grunt, addressing himself forcibly to Ching-Ching.

"Say dat again!" cried the accused.

"You're a blarmed, darned, apple-headed, cock-eyed thief!"

The words had scarcely escaped the lips of the boatswain when Ching-Ching dashed down his umbrella and threw himself into a fighting attitude. Bill Grunt did the same, with a warm eye upon the moving fists of the Chinaman.

But he had forgotten his feet—those very active feet, now famous throughout the Belvedere—and one of them rising suddenly, laid hold of the boatswain's nose with the two first toes.

Ching-Ching gave him one mighty wrench, and then let go. Bill thought that his nasal organ was gone, and clapped his hand to his face, while hot tears of anguish trickled down his cheeks.

"Let me get hold of him!" he cried, feeling about.

But at that moment the man on the look-out cried:

"Wreck ahead, sir!"

CHAPTER X.

THE CLAW OF THE TIGER.

There is something terribly sympathetic in certain cries, and the shout, "Wreck ahead!" turned the eyes of every sailor in that direction.

"Reefs there," said Tom.

"And land not far away," added Handsome Harry. "I can see it lying like a cloud in the horizon."

This much could be seen but partially; but those in the bows of the Belvedere could make out the stumps of two masts and part of a shattered bowsprit.

"That's a brig," said Bill Grunt, "and she's hard and fast until the sea is kind enough to break her to pieces."

The breeze was not very strong, and the sea was only comfortably rough for a boat, so Harry sent the cutter in command of Tom True. Ira Staines, who had not yet received any particular appointment on board the Belvedere, volunteered to go with him, and the offer was accepted.

Ching-Ching also tendered his services, which were, however, declined, with a gentle intimation from Ira that he would find nothing there to prig. Our friend retired, fanning himself indignantly.

"Yankee people a cust lot," he said to Samson.

"Berry cust," answered Samson.

The boat was lowered over the lee quarter, and Tom True started to reconnoiter the wreck. Several swollen carcasses of men, awful to look upon, were hovering between the tides, and Tom marked upon the head and chest of many a ghastly wound.

"Rough work been going on," he said.

"Yes, and I could almost swear that I know that cut," returned Ira, pointing to a corpse bobbing near.

"Pull away, men," cried Tom, with the hot blood of anger suffusing his face. "There have been dark deeds here."

They pulled through an opening in the reef, and, getting into smooth water, were soon beside the wreck. It was an English brig apparently about two hundred and fifty tons burden, and nearly new; everything was good about her, and her deck was a model. Both masts had gone about fifteen feet from the planks, and not a single boat was to be seen.

A lot of her top hamper was lumbering about on the lee side of the vessel and the mainsail, still set, was floating beside her.

She lay on her beam-ends, hard and fast on the reef, which in places peeped above the water, but where the rock was showed about a foot under it.

"Looks like a wreck after all," said Tom.

"She was flying from something," returned Ira Staines, "and blundered in here in her fright."

They mounted over her sides and went below. On opening the first cabin door a terrible sight met their view.

Two men, bound together, were lying in a heap in the corner, with their throats cut, and close by a child—but little more than an infant—also brutally murdered. The next cabin revealed a woman half naked, as if she had made a desperate struggle for her life. Around her throat was a piece of rope.

But why dwell upon such ghastly scenes? The walk from cabin to cabin only revealed more of Satan's work, and Tom sickened at the sight.

"The Vulture has been here," said Ira Staines. "Ah! there's little pity when they begin."

"How could you have mixed with such men?" asked Tom.

"Ask that wreck why it lies upon the reef. I ran aground in my flight," replied Ira.

They searched the vessel through, and found no sign of life. Every article of value had been removed, and the work of plunder was thoroughly done. Even the name of the vessel had been erased, and there was nothing left to tell whither she was going.

"Can aught avenge this?" asked Tom, as they settled into the boat again.

"I fear not," answered Ira, shaking his head. "Why then try to?"

"I obey my captain," said Tom. "Give way, my men, the air is full of cries and ghastly deeds."

When our hero learned the story the desire which had been so long upon him, to run down his foe, increased tenfold. With hands passionately clasped, he bade them crowd all sail; and, although his gallant bark flew through the water, he said she had lost her power—she crept—she crawled.

"To Santa Chardo!" he cried. "There, if anywhere, we shall meet or hear of him."

"He's been there once or twice," said Ira; "that I know, and you are bound to hear of him."

"You speak frankly. Have you learned to hate your old master?"

"I never loved him. There is nobody in the world I love."

"Have you no heart?" asked Tom.

"None," replied the Yankee; "it has been dead and cold these ten years."

He turned away to hide the passing bitterness in his face, and, lounging across the deck, leaned over the opposite side of the vessel, looking moodily at the sea.

"Is all dead there?" said Tom.

"I fear not," replied our hero. "Better for him to be dead to all than live in a whirlwind of passion, as I do. Is the hour of vengeance never to come?"

"It may," said Tom; "and, when it is over and past, what then?"

"I care not."

"Have you nothing to live for?"

"Nothing."

"You have forgotten Juanita."

"Ah, yes!" said Harry, sadly; "I had forgotten her, and when I am dead and gone she will easily forget me—she is a woman. Oh, Tom! you have some regard for me?"

"A great deal, Harry."

"To you alone do I ever show the melting mood; but I can trust you with my weakness, because you are my friend. I am

tossed and torn, rent and riven by something within which drives me from my vengeance, and something which holds me back. One voice seems to say: 'On, with fire and sword, and lay him low.' The other cries: 'Beware of vengeance, lest it recoil upon yourself!' And so they struggle on."

"Which voice is paramount?" asked Tom.

"That which urges me forward," returned Harry. "Look on yon wreck, now but a bare speck; and yet I see the shadows of murdered men and women hovering around it, urging me on with frenzied arms —'Forward! forward!'"

"If this pursuit ends not soon one way or the other," said Tom, as he watched the retreating figure of his captain, "he will go mad. What a great and terrible wrong must have been done to turn one so brave and noble to a raging tiger!"

The land, which had hitherto been misty, now opened better to their view, revealing an island about six miles long. As they drew nearer a small town and harbor were revealed.

"Santa Chardo that is," said Ira Staines, as he lighted a cheroot; "and for all its being so small and looking so peaceful, there's a mighty lot of mischief in it."

"Aye, I suppose so," returned Tom.

"If we stay there a day or two, come ashore with me, and I will show you something—that is, if you will trust yourself with me."

"Why not?"

"Well, I came aboard here without any particular character, and a little doubt would be only natural."

"I assure you that I have none."

"Thank you; spoken like a true British sailor. I shan't betray your trust."

"I know you will not," said Tom.

The Belvedere now crossed the bar of a small harbor, and a gun from a fort on the hill fired a blank shot.

"You need not be afraid of their pocket-pistols," said Ira, contemptuously; "take no notice of them. In a few moments you will have a big, blustering, full-blow Spaniard on board. You tickle him first with your swagger, and take the wind out of his sails."

CHAPTER XI.

HIS EXCELLENCY, DON TRAVIO.

The prediction of Ira Staines was almost immediately verified, for the Belvedere had barely dropped her anchor, when a boat pulled off, rowed by native coolies, and steered by a man in a most enormous cocked hat and gorgeous uniform.

As the boat drew up at the side, this important personage looked up, and Tom True and Ira Staines looked down.

"Now, old cock, who are you?" asked Tom.

"I will let you know who I am," replied the Spaniard. "How dare you enter the harbor of Santa Chardo without a permit?"

"Who from?"

"Me. I am his Excellency Don Travio!"

"Never heard of you. Who told you to give permits?" said Tom. "Now, keep down; don't you attempt to come on board without our permit, or I'll knock your two eyes into one."

"You impudent rascal!" foamed the don. "I've a good mind to blow you out of the water."

"If you say that again," replied Tom, "I'll blow you into it."

"Good!" murmured Ira Staines, flicking the ash from his cigarette. "Good! The don is nearly settled."

"Are—are you the captain of this in—this craft?" gasped his savage excellency.

"No."

"Then let me see him instantly," said Don Travio.

"He is just enjoying an afternoon nap, and cannot be disturbed," replied Tom, coolly. "Call again to-morrow, my aged one."

"No joking, Tom," said the voice of Harry behind him. "What is all this about?"

"A Spanish onion is making a little stink," said Tom. "He wants to see you."

"Step on board, sir," said Harry. "Allow me to welcome you on board the Belvedere."

"I have been grossly insulted," gasped the Spaniard,

"All a mistake," said Harry. "Permit me to apologize and ask what you want."

"I want to know how you dare enter the harbor of Santa Chardo without my permission?"

"Have the kindness to look at this pass, from Don Salvo."

"Don Salvo!" muttered the don, turning a little pale. "Yes, just so. Ahem! Permit me the honor."

He held out his hand, a changed man. He put aside all his pride and became affable; nay, he was abject, and showed a tendency to grovel on the deck.

"I want a word or two with you in my cabin," said Harry.

The two went below, and as the noise made by the don had drawn all from below, the crew of the Belvedere made a very lively appearance. Ching-Ching and Samson were of course there, walking under the former's inevitable gingham.

After a while they leaned over the side and took a survey of the coolies, whose skins gleamed like mahogany in the sun. All their heads were bent down, and they seemed to be engrossed in the bottom of the boat.

"Ki—ki," said Ching-Ching.

In a moment every head was uplifted; and, as if by one voice, they answered, "Ki—ki."

A few mysterious sentences passed between them, which seemed to afford the coolies unqualified delight. Ching-Ching, extending his right hand, seemed to be blessing them in a fatherly manner.

"What de lilly game?" whispered Samson.

"Hush!" replied Ching-Ching, with a mysterious air; "dey know me."

"What ob dat?"

"Dey recognize in me de long-lost remperor's son."

"Now, Chingy," remonstrated Samson, "no deluring a friend like me."

"It true, Sammy," returned Ching-Ching. "My farder—ob whom I dare say you hab heard me speak—was stole in his infancy. De nuss take him out for a walk, and get talking to de mandarin. Up come a cussed ole woman and steal him away; and neber more did he see de palace agen."

"How dey recognize you?" asked Samson.

"Me no know," replied Ching-Ching; "you berrer ask dem."

As the language of the coolies was utterly unknown to Samson, there was little chance of his eliciting any information. The don now returned, and, as he stood by the side, he said to Tom and Ira:

"I have asked your captain to dine with me and a few friends to-night; and I shall be happy to see you gentlemen at my board."

"Thank you," replied Tom and the Yankee.

"Berry much obliged," said Ching-Ching, calmly, including himself in the invitation.

The don looked up and down the audacious Chinee with intense scorn.

"You put your nose inside my house," he said, "and I will have you tarred and feathered."

With this he went over the side, leaving Ching-Ching burning with the sense of a deep and lasting insult. The boat pushed off and went rapidly toward the shore.

"You hear treaten dat, Sammy?" he said.

"Me hear him," replied Samson.

"He turn up him nose at de remperer's long-lost son," said Ching-Ching. "He say he hab dis chile tarred and feathered. Nebber mind, Sammy; we call on him to-night."

"Dat so?" replied Samson.

"I'm blessed if that Chinee chap ain't made suffin of hisself now," muttered Bill Grunt as he eyed the pair strutting indignantly to and fro; "he ses he's a hemperor's long-lost son. Well, he may be; but if he is, he was chucked out of the winder when a kid, becos they didn't like the looks of him. A hemperor's son! I hopes they'll knock him on the head to-night."

How near this hope was being fulfilled, we shall presently see. In the meantime, Handsome Harry gave instructions for the different watches of the Belvedere, and announced that he, Tom and Ira Staines were going ashore that night, and a boat was to be kept waiting for them.

"And let nobody else leave the ship," he said.

"Nobody, sir?" echoed Bill.

"Not a soul. Remember, I hold you responsible for their safe-keeping."

The day passed and the night drew near. About six o'clock the sun went down and the stars came out. Then the little town of Santa Chardo became gay with a thousand little lamps in the windows of the houses, looking like fireflies.

Harry, Tom and Ira—all armed—got into the cutter and then pulled ashore. A few minutes afterward Ching-Ching and Samson came upon deck.

"Hallo!" cried Bill Grunt, confronting them; "whither bound, mates?"

"For de shore," replied Samson.

"Then you can't go."

"Why not?"

"Agin orders. All hands below till the captain returns."

"Then you get down," said Ching-Ching, deftly tilting him into the hold. "Massa Sammy, help me to batten dis ole man down."

The work was done in a trice, and leaving the mate a prisoner, they lowered one of the boats and got into it.

"Who goes there?" cried one of the watch, not one of whom had witnessed the late maneuver.

"Ching-Ching and myself. Pull Massa Grunt ashore," replied Samson.

"Very strange!" muttered the man. "I'll swear I heard the captain say that nobody was to leave the ship; and here's the mate left in charge the first to disobey orders. I'll lay the case afore my mates."

He did so promptly, and the cry was raised that if one went all went; and the other boats being lowered, the men crowded in, and in a few minutes the Belvedere was deserted.

CHAPTER XII.

DON TRAVIO'S FEAST.

It was a glorious night in August—moonless, but with so many stars that the sky looked like a large arch of glittering gems—not a cloud in the sky—not a breath of wind—not a ruffle upon the bosom of the deep.

The sky looked down upon the villa of Don Travio, where the feast was prepared. The house was really a very fine one, abutting on the road just outside the town, with a lake and handsome grounds in the rear.

The island of Santa Chardo was blessed by nature. The gifts bestowed upon her were a rich soil, resplendent vegetation and a splendid climate. It was a spot which might have been made a paradise if the foul passions of men had not made it a hell.

In the garden, well laid and kept, was an assemblage of men, waiting for the signal for supper, and a more motley or discordant assemblage it would be hardly possible to conceive.

There were adventurers of all nations—the outcast of every clime and country; the hiding parricide—the fraudulent bankrupt—the heartless slave dealer—the ruined gambler—duelists with the mark of Cain upon their brows—swindlers with shame stamped upon them from head to heel.

It was a pleasant company this beneath the sky all glittering with stars, scarcely fit society for the beautiful banana, the plantain and the manioc trees; and their voices harmonized but ill with the musical gurgle and splash of the pretty fountain which reflected the peaceful lights above.

Beneath the piazza of the house the elite of the company seemed to have assembled. There were Don Travio and Handsome Harry, with his two followers, looking idly upon a gambling party playing for heavy sums.

The faces of the players were aflame with the lust of gain, and as the cards were dealt out their eager eyes watched the nimble fingers of the dealer. Old and practised hands were these, well versed in the art of turning up an ace, or sleeving the king.

"Do you play?" asked Don Travio, addressing Harry.

"Me—no!" replied our hero, contemptuously. "I see no fun in sitting hour after hour thirsting for another man's money. Look at them! Is that the sight to tempt a man to be a gambler?"

"You are severe," said the don, shrugging his shoulders,

"Not at all," said Harry. "Look at that fellow on the right—he is cheating!"

"They all cheat," replied the don, "when they can."

"And now he is found out," said Harry.

High words arose from the gaming table, and a number of the guests gathered around. The detected cheat could not deny his crime. He had been caught in the act—taken red-handed, with the king of diamonds in his sleeve.

"Pitch him into the lake," cried one of the greatest rascals present.

None so virtuous as your true ruffian, when other people's sins are on the board.

"Who will do it?" asked the gamester.

"We will," cried a dozen voices.

"Fair play," said Harry, stepping up. "One at a time. If any one man can throw him in, let it be done."

"And who are you?" cried a burly ruffian, stepping forward.

"Captain of the Belvedere," was the calm reply.

"Then you want some of your cheek taken out of you," said the other. "Can you fight?"

"A little."

"A ring, comrades," cried the burly one, "and let us see what he is made of. Can you wrestle?"

"A little—I was reared in Cumberland."

"And I in Westmoreland. We, at least, meet well," said the ruffian, grimly.

"If you object to this," whispered Don Travio, "I can stop it."

"Thank you, no," replied Harry, in the same tone. "I think I can stop it myself."

"The man that's thrown is to be pitched into the lake," said the burly one, stepping into the ring which the spectators had made.

"So be it," returned Harry; and the two men, having divested themselves of their upper garments, closed.

When the fray began there was but one opinion among the spectators as to the issue. Even Tom could not think it possible for Harry to be victorious over the giant facing him.

But skill is better, or at least as good, as muscular power, and Harry was the most skillful. He was well up in the mystery of cross buttocks, swinging trips, and other falls connected with wrestling, and in two minutes the burly one was lying on his back, gazing in a bewildered manner at the stars, which seemed to be running in and out, and sliding about in the most wonderful manner.

"To the lake—to the lake!" cried fifty voices.

"Let him be," said Harry. "I have shaken the brag out of him, and I am content."

The voice of a male servant now lustily announced that supper was ready, and the don, helping Harry to resume his garments, said:

"Let the ruck go into the general saloon; you and your friends will join a select party in my own compartment."

Harry bowed, and as soon as the general rush was over, he and his friends followed the don to the left wing of the establishment, where, in a room of moderate size—most sumptuously furnished—supper was laid for about twenty.

In a few moments they were joined by a number of men whose garments were of the richest materials. They had an air about them of being accustomed to wealth and luxury, and, on being introduced to our three friends, simply bowed and took their seats. As they have no very great share in our story, we abstain from troubling our readers with their respective titles and names.

When all were seated, there was one chair empty on the right side of Don Travio. Harry sat on his left, Tom True next, and Ira Staines opposite.

"I expect another here," said the don; "nine is the hour I named, and it wants five minutes yet. Shall we await his coming?"

Of course the general answer was yes; and conversation became general. The don questioned Harry as to his intimacy with Don Salvo, but got very little in return for his pains. Harry was not the man to unbosom himself to a stranger.

"Salvo is a little eccentric," said the Spaniard; "he has strange likes and dislikes. For

instance, he has a great aversion to my friend whom we are expecting."

"Indeed!" said Harry, indifferently.

"Yes. And I must impress upon you the necessity of not telling Salvo that you met him here."

"We meet but seldom," said Harry, "and then we only converse on private matters of business. The tie between us is only one of mutual interest."

The don seemed relieved at this, and smiled amiably. The clock on the mantelpiece struck the hour of nine, and a servant threw open the door.

"Captain Brocken!" he cried.

Harry turned, and with a wild yell of rage sprang to his feet.

It was the captain of the Black Jaguar!"

CHAPTER XIII.

CHING-CHING ASHORE.

While following the movements of our hero, we must not neglect the minor personages who figure in these pages, and Ching-Ching and Samson now call for a little attention.

On reaching the shore they pulled up their boat, and placed it against a tall post, as a guide to find it again on their return. Then they stood still to reconnoitre the town.

"Which way now?" asked Samson.

Ching-Ching started, and, dashing down his umbrella, exclaimed:

"Dat de one ting I could not 'member, where Don Travey live."

"You no know?"

"No."

"Golly!" said Samson; and then he took a seat upon the shingle.

"But what matter?" cried Ching-Ching, brightening up. "Let us go 'bout like two genlymen, and enjoy ourselves. Got any money?"

Samson dived into his trousers pocket, and produced all he had with him.

"One dollar—two dollar," he said.

Ching-Ching had nothing but a bad penny and the top of a big, flat button. This was not much, but he appeared to be very hopeful, and at once proposed that they should go and gamble.

"Wid my two dollars?" asked Samson.

"Yes—and my money," said Ching-Ching.

"Golly! what de use ob dat?"

"You see," returned the sagacious Chinee.

Turning into the first street they came near, Ching-Ching looked out for a house where something more than usual might be going on. The open windows of one revealed a number of persons walking about a magnificent saloon, and Ching-Ching, with a grunt of satisfaction, opened the door and went in.

The extraordinary appearance of the two friends attracted no attention, for the people there assembled were of a very motley order. Men of all nations and all grades were clustered about two tables, presided over by croupiers, or walked about singly, or in twos and threes.

There were very few present, and these were of an uncertain, or rather, a very certain age. Youth had passed by from them, the early passions had died away, and the lust of avarice had made their old age hideous. All belonged to the Spanish nation.

Samson and Ching-Ching walked up to the nearest table. Samson put down a dollar on the red, and Ching-Ching with his top of a button boldly backed the black.

The red turned up, and Samson's money was doubled. The croupier taking in the winnings discovered the metal button.

"Confusion!" he said. "Who put this down?"

Ching-Ching fanned himself without showing any emotion, and the company looked rather astonished. One who had seen our friend make his important deposit ventured to point him out.

"That's the man," he said.

"Me, sar," returned Ching-Ching, promptly; "me see you do it—so did you, Sammy."

"Me not see you do it," replied Samson, qualifying the support he gave his friend.

As disputes covered a deal of time—and time was money—the croupier tossed the button behind him, and muttering anathemas upon all fools, continued the game. Ching-Ching went now and stood beside the

chair of the individual who had been kind enough to point him out.

He was a stout, florid old man, with a very bald head—an irascible old trader of some sort. Next to him was a lean old Spanish duenna in the short petticoats of her country, displaying two pipe-shanks of legs under her chair.

Presently the old trader dropped a dollar, and stooped to pick it up. Ching-Ching immediately thrust one of his handy feet under the duenna's chair, and gave her a mighty rap upon the leg, just above the ankle.

A more tender specimen of lovely woman would have screamed out, but she took a different course. Dropping her fan, she seized the old fellow by his back hair, and gave him a smack upon the bald part of his head which resounded through the room.

"What's that for?" gasped the old man, with a face like a turkey cock.

"Take that!" cried the old woman, giving him a blow upon one cheek, "and that!" giving him one upon the other. "Now, do it again."

"Do what?" demanded the old man.

"Oh, you know—do it again," was all the reply he got.

To have a quarrel with a woman is all very well in private; but in public we are obliged to be more circumspect. Men look down upon a fellow who wrangles with the fair sex, and the trader was obliged to bottle his wrath.

"Two's the main!" cried the croupier; and the game went on.

Ching-Ching, satisfied for the present, moved away to the other table, where Samson was already engaged with varying success, but wiming a little on the whole. Ching-Ching put down his bad penny, and was immediately bowled out. The croupier, with an angry gesture, knocked it off the table, and at the same time swept off a dollar belonging to a stranger.

The two coins fell upon the floor, and Ching-Ching pounced upon the dollar in a twinkling. The stranger got the bad penny.

"This is not my coin," he said to Ching-Ching.

"Whose am it den?" asked Ching-Ching.

"Why, yours."

"Mine, sar? Oh, no, sar; nebber see him afore."

"This Chinee has been up to some game at the other table," said one of the waiters; "he ought to be turned out."

Half a dozen angry faces glared upon Ching-Ching, and he who had lost the dollar drew a knife. Our friend remained calm, and Samson, who knew nothing of what had occurred, finding that there was a lull in the game, proceeded to count his dollars.

"One, two—six, seven," he murmured; "five dollars to de good. I wonder how Chingy get on?"

He looked up just in time to see his bosom friend assailed by a little host of waiters and furious players. Two or three knives were flashing, and mischief was undoubtedly meant.

Samson had his cutlass, but he was chary of using it unless there was great need, and so he sought another weapon. Seizing a chair, he dashed it upon the ground and smashed it to pieces. Taking one of the legs in his hand, he went to the rescue.

It was time he did so, for they had already got Ching-Ching down, and preparations were in force for cutting his throat. All his strength did not avail him against a dozen strong men.

But Samson scattered them, with a few broken heads to share among them, and jerking Ching-Ching to his feet, the pair made for the door. The people, who at first intended to bar the way, scattered as they looked upon Samson's brawny arms, and down-stairs they ran.

A few of the most hot-headed followed, and the first who came out was knocked down by Samson, and the second who showed received a kick in the chest from Ching-Ching. This pair falling, made a capital stumbling-block for the rest, who rolled over in a glorious heap.

Samson and Ching-Ching sauntered away without being followed, and turning into a drinking saloon, had a little refreshment after their exertions, which Ching-Ching paid for with the dollar he had obtained in the questionable manner related. A little table was just behind, on which stood sev-

eral pots and glasses left by a party which had lately gone.

The temptation was too great to be resisted.

"Fine evening, sar," he said to the host, an Italian, with a well-oiled countenance.

"Si, senor," was the reply.

"Berry fine," continued Ching-Ching, and out went his foot, and in the most wonderful manner a glass was thrust up his back.

"Hab you seen any bad charackers here?" continued Ching-Ching.

"I never inquire about the character of my customers," said the host.

"Better look at some ob dem," returned Ching-Ching, and then he safely stowed the second glass.

"I'm not afraid of them."

"Oh! no; you much too brave a man," said the artful Ching-Ching; "all Italians berry brave."

"We are the bravest nation in the world," said the host.

"My uncle was an Italian," continued Ching-Ching—who had now got all the property safely under his jacket; "dat what my farder allers so proud of."

"If your uncle was an Italian, your mother must have been one," returned the host.

"Jes so," said Ching-Ching; "she played the gurgle-hurdle lovely."

This accomplishment did not apparently elevate her much in the eyes of the landlord, who took out a cloth and proceeded to rub the counter. While thus engaged, his eyes fell upon the empty table.

"Where's that lot just now sitting there?" he cried. "Here, Baptista Luigi; I've been plundered—robbed! Stop thief!"

And out he ran in pursuit.

Ching-Ching paused a moment, just to give decency to his exit, and then retired. All would have been well with him but for the landlord having discovered the street to be quite clear, and making a hasty return, he ran against Ching-Ching and knocked him against the door. A smash followed, and a shower of little bits of glass fell on the pavement.

"Oh, you're the thief; Diable!" growled the Italian; and, springing forward, he endeavored to grasp his collar.

Ching-Ching dived under his arm, came up behind him, seized him by the collar and rear, ran him inside, and shot him over his own counter, after the fashion of a clown going through a stage window.

Having thus disposed of the brave Italian, the two friends knocked down a few spindle-shanked waiters who barred their exit, and departed.

After this they wandered about into several other places, amusing themselves a little more quietly; and, as it was now nearly ten o'clock, they turned to go home.

Passing up a quiet street, they came upon a man standing by an open door, with his eyes fixed upon the stars in a very contemplative manner. He was a stout, important-looking person, with a gorgeous sash about his waist, and a four-foot rapier by his side.

The position of the man was tempting indeed, and, apparently, he neither saw nor heard the friends approaching. Their naked feet made but litle noise upon the roadway.

Signing to Samson to give him a dig in the ribs, Ching-Ching stooped down and seized him by the heels. The blow was given, and a quick movement turned him over into the passage.

Then they turned and fled, but had barely got well upon the way when they heard the don shouting behind them, followed by the patrol, who had come unexpectedly upon the scene, with clashing arms.

If caught there was but little mercy to expect, and the odds being unequal, the friends kept wisely on. Both were fleet of foot, but Samson was the best runner. Turning a corner, Ching-Ching slipped and fell, and Samson, without perceiving the mishap, kept on.

The next moment the don and the patrol came bouncing round the corner, and nearly fell over Ching-Ching, who was in a sitting position.

"Here's one of the scoundrels," roared the don. "Run him through!"

"Don't hurt poor lame Chinaman," said Ching-Ching, mildly.

"Come, none of that humbug," said the don, roughly. "Didn't you assault me just now?"

"No, sar—no, sar; me poor lame Chinaman, born wid one leg bent under de body. My farder de same, and my moder hab no legs at all."

"What are you doing here?"

"Been begging, sar, and nobody come to fetch me, sar; all berry drunk, sar."

"Turn him over," growled the don, "and look at him."

They did so, and there, sure enough, was one leg bent under his body. The don told them to bend it back, and one of the men tried to, Ching-Ching uttering howls of anguish.

"Can't do it, gracious senor," said the man.

"Born so," moaned Ching-Ching. "Farder de same."

"Did you see anybody pass here?"

"Two men," groaned Ching-Ching. "One man a nigger, t'other a coolie; both run berry fast."

"Go after them," said the don. "I dare say they belong to the Belvedere. I will stop and keep guard over this fellow. When you return lock him up."

The don drew his sword, and took up a position about two feet in front of Ching-Ching, who had not calculated upon this. The new turn the position had taken required a little reflection, and while he was working out the problem the patrol moved away.

"It strikes me that you are a precious scamp," said the don.

"Oh! no, sar—poor lame beggar," moaned Ching-Ching. "Oh! my poor leg."

"You have no right to be about at this hour."

"Poor lame Chinaman can't help it, sar."

"What's that?" cried the don, suddenly.

A terrible uproar arose near the beach. The clash of arms, mingled with foreign oaths, and cries of "To the rescue; Belvederes!"

The don incautiously turned, and up sprang the lame man, who put his head between the don's legs and tossed him into the air. As he fell he dropped his rapier, and Ching-Ching seizing it, sped towards the scene of the uproar.

CAPTER XIV. 15

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

Face to face at last!

For a moment the leader of the Black Jaguar, Captain Brocken, stood like a man petrified, gazing at Handsome Harry, who seemed to be bound by a momentary spell.

It broke, and with a shout our hero leapt forward, cutlass in hand; but others were before him—Don Travio and other Spaniards sprang between.

"Stand aside!" cried Harry, hoarsely.

The noise of the closing door, which betrayed the flight of Captain Brocken, half maddened him, and he aimed a blow at the nearest Spaniard which would have cut him in twain if he had not dodged away.

"What would you do?" asked the don, sternly.

"Have his life," cried Harry; "out of the way."

"He is my guest."

"What care I—he is my foe; and hark ye, Don Travio, I see how it is now—you harbor the enemies of Don Salvo. He has set a price upon that villain's head. Let me pass."

Glances were exchanged between the Spaniard, and in a moment twenty swords were drawn.

"You pass not here," cried Don Travio, boldly.

"By heavens I will."

"You shall not."

"A little row, here," said Tom, coolly. "Come, Staines, let us give them a prod with our toasting-forks."

Harry dashed himself into the thick of the Spaniards, and scattered them as the prow of a vessel scatters the waves. Two rolled upon the carpet lifeless, and one of them was Don Travio.

The sight of blood seemed to rouse the fury of the rest, who, with teeth set and glaring eyes, cut and slashed with the utmost fury. Ira and Tom planted their backs against their leader, and followed him step by step.

The clash of arms brought a number of the other guests to the open windows, and

eager to join the melee, they sprang through just in time to see Harry reach the door and open it.

He and his two supporters passed through, and then it was rapidly closed and locked. The noise of the key turning sent the others howling round to catch Harry the other way.

As they came to the front the figure of Captain Brocken dashed out and disappeared in the surrounding gloom. Then Harry came forth.

There were full fifty men before them, but he esteemed them as dirt alone. He had a cause to fight for, and they had none. He valued not his life, and they were particularly anxious about theirs.

He was backed by two good men, and as the reapers slash through the wheat mowing as they go, so went those three brave men; but the impediment offered was sufficient to secure the escape of the pirate captain.

As Harry broke through from his enemies he fancied he saw the dim outline of a figure flying down the road; and with the speed of a hound in chase of the wolf he followed. The guests of the dead Don Travio knew but little of what had been going on; but it was known that the don had died by the hands of the young Englishman, and that was enough.

It takes a brave man to stand his ground against odds, but the meanest cur will join in a pursuit; and as Harry, followed by Tom and Ira, darted down the road, there came a shouting rabble behind.

Our hero overtook the figure, and found it was nothing but a poor friar doing some self-imposed penance, and, with a cry of vexation, he would have turned again, but a murderous foe were at hand, and it could not be done.

But he would not fly.

"Stand firm!" he cried, and the three men moved back a pace at a time with their faces to the mob.

On they came, shouting; but few caring to come within reach of Harry's weapon. In one hand he held his cutlass, in the other a pistol; and Tom and Ira had the same.

One of the Spaniards behind fired; but the shot took effect in the neck of one of his foremost friends, who fell gasping upon the road. Those in front seemed to possess no fire-arms.

Fortunately the road was narrow, being only a foot-path to the sea, which now lay about three hundred yards to the rear, at the bottom of a steep hill.

At the bottom of this was a drinking saloon, from which came sounds of noisy mirth, and the Spaniards began to shout, hoping to bring out more of their countrymen to the rear.

Harry perceived their object.

"If we have foes behind," he said, "there is nothing before us but to sell our lives dearly."

"We will die with you," said Tom.

"My life is yours," added Ira Staines.

"Tried and true both," muttered Harry. "Ha!"

A Spaniard rushed upon him and aimed a blow at his head. Harry parried it, and cut his sword-arm almost in two.

"A musical howl," said Ira, as the man retired.

Step by step they went down the hill, the Spaniards shouting. For a long while the revelers seemed to take no heed. The house was reached—a few moments now and the gallant trio would have passed it, when the Spaniards uttered one great cry.

That cry sealed their own doom.

The answering shout was in the English tongue, and, to the utter astonishment of our hero, out poured his own men.

It was not time to ask questions, or to seek to learn how it was that his orders had been disobeyed. Enough that they were there at the right moment.

"To the rescue, Belvederes!" he cried.

They knew that voice, which came upon them like the blast of a trumpet, and, answering it with stentorian throats, they rushed upon the bewildered Spaniards.

"Belvederes to the rescue!"

Now the fight was earnest—fairly man to man, and with but little chance of escape for the dons, unless they fought and were victorious, for now there came behind them a cry:

"Golly, de Belvederes am here!" and Harry saw his faithful Samson alone, bar-

ring their backward flight. In a few moments he is joined by some sailors who had climbed the high banks of the road, and the enemy is penned in.

Even rats will turn when shut in without escape, and the dogs of pirates and sea loafers fought like demons. The clash of arms brought many others from the drinking-saloon, but these, seeing so many blue-jackets about, displayed remarkable promptitude in retiring, and were seen no more.

The melee was at its height, and the Spaniards lay about the roadway like fallen leaves, when the patrol which had honored Ching-Ching with its attention, appeared upon the scene, evidently anticipating an ordinary Santa Chardo street row.

Finding that it was a different matter, the officer gave the word to return for reinforcements; a very happy idea of his, considering that the whole of the municipal guard were with him. He was a prudent man, however, and did all for the best.

As he wheeled to go, Ching-Ching flew by, and, with a cry, "Coming Belvederes," rushed into the fight.

The hubbub increased. Swords clashed, pistols flashed; and men with curses dealt out death. The Spaniards fell like ears of corn until but a score or so remained, and these threw down their arms and begged for mercy.

"Let them go," said Harry, and, sheathing his sword, cried, "Belvederes, bring your wounded with you."

"Save us, senor!" gasped one of his foes; "we shall be left to die here."

"Is it so?"

"Si, senor."

"Bring such cases as we can treat," said Harry to his men; "light a fire here, so that you can see to do your work. Now, Johnson, tell me how you came ashore."

"Mr. Grunt left the ship with Samson and the Chinee," replied the man.

"Grunt desert his post!" muttered Harry; "this is something new. Ha! Samson, you here?"

"Yes, Massa Harry."

"And Ching-Ching?"

"Me too, sar."

"Where is Mr. Grunt?"

"Not with us, sar."

"He came on shore with you?"

"Oh, no, sar!" replied Ching-Ching. "I left him on board. That I'll swear. I dare say you find him dere."

"But you said he was with you," said Johnson.

"Oh, yes!" replied Ching-Ching, candidly, "but me a berry big liar—sometimes."

"So was your father, wasn't he?" asked Tom.

"De poor old man am dead," said Ching-Ching, "so it not kind to rake up him's faults, sar."

"Then you let him rest," said Ira.

The boats which brought the men ashore were still waiting, and, getting into one, Harry selected a crew to pull him back to the Belvedere. Arriving on board, he found the deck clear, and somebody hammering away in the hold.

"Raise the hatchway," he said.

The hatchway was lifted, and Bill Grunt came forth, blustering and swearing.

"I've been down there a week, cuss you," he cried, looking about blindly. "Let me get hold of your Chinese throat, and I'll settle you."

"He is not on board," returned Harry. "How came you down the hold, and the crew ashore?"

"That blessed Chinaman pitched me down, sir."

"An act that would have brought upon him severe punishment," returned Harry, "but for it proving a fortunate thing for me. Get hammocks ready for the wounded. We have had a bit of a brush ashore."

"And that Chinese, sir?"

"Oh! let him be. I will talk to him by and by."

"Well, that's nice!" muttered Bill Grunt. "Howsomever, if the capen don't take it out of him, I will!"

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